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CONTACTS:

Mike Claffey	(IDOT)	312-814-3957
Marisa Kollias	(IDOT)	312-814-4693
Tom White	(AAR)	202-639-2556
Tom Livingston	(CSX)	708-832-2169
Brian Steele	(CDOT)	312-744-0707

**CREATE Partners Break Ground on
New Project in Southwest Cook County**
*Rail Project will reduce rail congestion, improve air quality in
Summit, Bridgeview and Bedford Park*

SUMMIT – Public and private sector partners involved in the CREATE Program (the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program) broke ground today on a \$4.2 million railroad modernization project that will upgrade the signal system and help mitigate conflicting use of tracks among freight trains, Metra, and Amtrak along the Indiana Harbor Belt Corridor from Bedford Park to Summit. The groundbreaking was attended by U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Chicago), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Director of Public & Intermodal Transportation Joseph Clary, CSX Chicago Division Manager Jeff White, and other rail industry and government officials.

The project, which will include the installation of microprocessors and new signals, will take 5 months to complete. It will be immediately followed by an \$11.2 million modernization project in McCook on the Indiana Harbor Belt which will improve freight train efficiency and increase speeds up to 40 miles per hour.

CREATE is a historic public-private partnership involving the railroads, the city of Chicago, the state of Illinois and the federal government, and is designed to upgrade northeastern Illinois' freight and passenger train infrastructure for the 21st Century.

The \$4.2 million project getting underway today is 80 percent funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and 20 percent funded by the freight railroad industry. Work will be accomplished by CSX Transportation signal crews, with administrative oversight from IDOT. Rep. Lipinski secured \$100 million in federal funding for the CREATE program in 2006.

It will also increase the volume of trains that can be handled in the area that runs west of Harlem Ave. and north of 71st St. to the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal from 76 to 88 freight trains per day. Metra, Amtrak and their riders will benefit significantly from the project because it will reduce cross traffic interference, which often causes delays.

"More and more, our railroads are vital in moving freight in a safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly manner throughout this country. No matter where one works in the freight rail industry, they know that Chicago must meet the demand if the rest of the nation is to see the efficient delivery of freight. We are thankful and committed to our public partners to bring the benefits of CREATE to a reality, and we also particularly grateful to Rep. Lipinski for being such a strong and effective advocate for the program" said Jeff White, CSX Chicago Division Manager.

“The CREATE Program includes numerous projects like this one that will improve service for Metra and Amtrak riders as well the efficiency of the freight rail industry,” said Milton R. Sees, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the state agency that is involved in the project. “As Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich has pointed out, CREATE will not only speed rail traffic, improve air quality, and eliminate the long waits and the danger presented by 25 rail grade crossings – it will also boost economic development and produce jobs.”

“The CREATE program will provide substantial benefits to Chicago-area residents and the entire nation,” said Lipinski. “This investment ensures that northern Illinois continues to reap the jobs and economic benefits associated with being the nation’s transportation hub. And most importantly for my constituents, CREATE will shorten commute times on the roads and rails, cut emissions from stalled vehicles, and improve commuter safety. I am proud to have secured the funding to make this project and the CREATE program possible.”

Upon its completion, CSX will begin a second major CREATE project. The \$11 million project in McCook and Hodgkins - east of East Ave. between I-55 and 55th St. - will extend the length of the existing rail connection between BNSF and the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad. It will also construct a second southwest rail connection between these two lines.

Background on CREATE

As the rail transportation hub for the nation, northeastern Illinois carries one third of the rail and truck cargo in the country. And it is the only region in the country where six of the seven major railroads converge. The CREATE project is the first time in which the federal, state and local governments have teamed up with the railroads to tackle the issue of rail and road congestion on such a massive scale.

Over the next 20 years, the demand for freight rail service in Chicago is expected to nearly double. Studies undertaken by Geoffrey Hewings from the University of Illinois suggest that without the improvements provided by CREATE, the Chicago region could lose out on 17,000 jobs and \$2 billion in annual economic production. Because of the manner in which train tracks currently intersect with each other and with roads, and because regional freight railroads defer to Amtrak and Metra in track utilization, it can now take up to 48 hours for freight cars to pass through the Chicago region. Consistent delays in rail-based freight, including grade crossings, threaten the economic vitality of the region, make it harder for farmers to make a profit, lead to increased traffic congestion on roads and highways, generate unnecessary levels of air pollution, raise safety concerns, and adversely affect the reliability and speed of rail passenger service.

With funding from the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Metra, Amtrak, and the American Association of Railroads, CREATE will eliminate these problems.

The CREATE (Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency) program is comprised of more than 78 projects throughout northeastern Illinois – of which 43 have been initiated.

CREATE will ultimately include construction of 25 new roadway overpasses or underpasses where cars cross railroad tracks at grade level. These grade separations will eliminate motor vehicle delays at these crossings and also improve air quality since cars and trucks will not be idling at these locations. CREATE will also include six new rail-to-rail overpasses separating passenger and freight train tracks.

The CREATE partners include the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Chicago Department of Transportation, the Association of American Railroads and the six major railroad lines that operate in the region: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation, Canadian Pacific Railway, CN, CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern Corporation and Union Pacific Railroad; the two switch carriers: The Belt Railway Company of Chicago and the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad; as well as Metra and Amtrak.